

## ACTIONS AND BELIEFS COLLIDE

How much do your beliefs affect your actions? Does a belief in God change the way you live? Jon A. Shields, an assistant professor of Political Science at the University of Colorado, writes about a study on giving by Arthur Brooks:

Drawing on some ten data sets, Brooks finds that religiosity is among the best predictors of charitable giving. Religious Americans are not only much more likely to give money and volunteer their time to religious and secular institutions, they are also more likely to provide aid to family members, return incorrect change, help a homeless person, and donate blood. In fact, despite expecting to find just the opposite, Brooks concluded: "I have never found a measurable way in which secularists are more charitable than religious people."

Consider some examples. Religious citizens who make \$49,000 gave away about 3.5 times as much money as secular citizens with the same income. They also volunteered twice as often, are 57 percent more likely to help homeless persons, and two-thirds more likely to give blood at their workplace. Meanwhile, those who insist that "beliefs don't matter as long as you're a good person" are not as good as those who do think beliefs matter. The former group gave and volunteered at much lower rates.

Yet even these findings tend to obscure the impact of religion on charity. This is because some of the survey respondents that Brooks classified as secular are indirectly affected by religion if they were raised in a religious household. Consider two secular Americans, identical in education, income, and other such measures, only one of whom was raised in a religious household. The secular citizen with a religious upbringing is nearly twice as likely to give to charity.